

Gardiner Chamber of Commerce

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The Gardiner Chamber of Commerce serves our community through developing local tourism while endorsing stewardship of the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Meeting date: **Thursday, November 18 2021, from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM**

Location: Gardiner Chamber of Commerce 216 Park St. Gardiner, MT & Virtual via Zoom

Purpose: Regularly Scheduled Monthly Board of Directors Meeting

Agenda:

Chamber Business

1.1. Roll Call & Introductions

Kelly Burns, Sarah Ondrus, Amanda Hagerty, Alex Roberts, Mike Skelton, Sabina Strauss, Chelsea Deweese

Excused Absence: Deborah Mackay

1.2 Approval of October Board Meeting Minutes

Keller made a motion to approve the October Board Meeting Minutes. Hagerty seconded the motion. Minutes approved without discussion.

1.3 Previous Action taken by the Board

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Discussion

Skelton opened the discussion with proposing changes to the timeline of reaching annual budget approvals. He noted that it would be more efficient and productive to have the preliminary budget presented at the November Board Meeting instead of the October Board Meeting. Reasons that would make this change beneficial includes the timeline of employee reviews, which are directly connected to annual salary increases, as well as having the final budget based on the Gardiner Area Resort Tax District (GRAD) collections. Discussion continued regarding the GRAD collections. Skelton concluded the discussion to requesting for the Board to table the FY 2022 discussion and vote until the December Board Meeting.

Strauss moved to table the FY 2022 Budget discussion and vote until the December Board Meeting. Hagerty seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Committee Updates

2.1 Mary Wilson – Yellowstone NPS Visitation

Visitation

October 2021 visitation was down 12% from October 2020 which was the busiest October on record. Recreation visits this October were up 85% from October 2019. Several short-term, weather-related road closures likely impacted visitation in 2019. So far in 2021, the park has hosted 4,789,644 recreation visits, up 28% from the same period last year, and up 20% from 2019.

Road Closure Reminder

Interior park roads are now closed for the season with the exception of the road from the North Entrance to the Northeast Entrance, which remains open all year conditions permitting. Park road updates can be obtained by texting 82190 to 888-777, or by calling the park's Road Condition Line at 307-344-2117. Albright Visitor Center is open daily from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. It will be closed Thanksgiving Day (the only day of the year it is not open).

Winter Preparations

The park is preparing for the winter season. Conditions permitting, roads into the interior of the park will open Wednesday, December 15 to over snow vehicle traffic. The "Explore in Winter" page on the park's website has been updated to include Top Things to Know in Winter. Wilson encouraged the Board to review this page and provide input.

www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/visiting-yellowstone-in-winter.htm

Top Things to Know in Winter

1. Most Park Roads Closed to Wheeled Vehicles
2. Want to See Old Faithful?
3. Services are Limited
4. Camping and Lodging
5. Prepare for Winter Conditions
6. Do Not Approach or Feed Wildlife
7. Stay on Boardwalks
8. Protect Yourself and Others
9. Enhance Your Experience
10. Connectivity is Limited

Revised Commercial Use Authorizations

The park is asking for public comments on revised Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) and [service-related operating plans](#) that will guide commercial services in the park for the next five years. The purpose of these revisions is to update the [existing CUA and operating plans](#), last approved in 2013. These revisions would improve the CUA program's consistency with federal laws, policies, and guidelines, and accommodate changing visitor needs and interests. The park would begin operating under this new plan beginning January 1, 2022.

Comments must be received by November 23, 2021. Comments may be submitted online at: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/YELLCUA> or by mail. Comments will not be accepted by fax, email, or other means. Mail comments to: Compliance Office, Attention: CUA Plan Revisions, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190.

2.2 Mike Thom – USFS

Summer Highlights

Thom opened his report with highlights from the summer season. Campground fee increases went smoothly and overall was a good transition. He also noted that dispersed camping behavior improved significantly compared to that of 2020. Signage addressing dispersed camping will arrive and be installed in November.

Winter Operations

Volunteers will groom ski trails up Bear Creek again this winter.

Christmas Permits are available at the office as well as recreation.gov.

The Bison Hunt will be occurring again this winter. FWP has installed additional signage to speak to closures and to educate the public regarding the hunt.

Beetie Gulch and the McConnell areas now have permanent firearm closures.

Travertine Quarry

The Little Shell Tribe owns the quarry and rock removal has increased. The Forest Service hold a conservation increase that allows for the public to have access to the area and to limit development.

2.2 Terese Petcoff – Executive Director’s Report

Updates

Petcoff opened her report with an update over the potential of the Gardiner Chamber selling Park Passes. She intends on making the first purchase of those passes by the start of April and have the contract completed in March.

Travel Guide Ad Sales will possibly become available by December 8th.

The Chamber’s Office Manager, Sara, will be leaving the Chamber tentatively by Mid-January. Petcoff plans to make an announcement in the Newsletter as well as the Monthly Member update on December 1st and open applications at that time. She encouraged the Board to reach out to anyone in mind that they believe would be a good fit for the role.

New Member

Bear’s Brew – set to open December 1st.

GRAD Application Status

The presentation at the November meeting for the Chamber’s Fund requests for an AED and the Bear Safe Canisters went very well. Both of our requests were on the smaller scale. GRAD has a little under \$500,000 they are able to award, and they were asked for over double that. We will find out at the December meeting what projects were awarded funding.

CVB

CVB update report share & highlights.

The 3rd Quarter (Jul-Sep) 2021 Lodging Tax Collection amounts have been posted to the MOT internet site. These are preliminary numbers for the 3rd Quarter.

The Department of Revenue reports collections for the 3rd Quarter of 2021 are up 54% statewide.

The Department of Revenue reports collections for Calendar 2021 are up 76% statewide.

Gardiner is up 54% compared to 2020 and up 38% compared to 2019.

Yellowstone Country: 43% compared to 2019; 49% compared to 2020

Belgrade: 58% compared to 2019; 68% compared to 2020

Big Sky: 95% compared to 2019; 64% compared to 2020

Bozeman: 55% compared to 2019; 88% compared to 2020

Livingston: 67% compared to 2019; 85% compared to 2020

Red Lodge: 66% compared to 2019 30% compared to 2020

West Yellowstone: 19% compared to 2019; 41% compared to 2020

2.3 Sara Fleming – Office Manager

October and November Visitation trends

Both months have been slow, and October was the first month that was finally slower than the visitation we had in October, Which is consistent with what the Park’s visitation stats are. “Where can we eat?” is our number one question. “What can we do in the park?” is number two. There has been a theme of folks wanting next day tours. It’s about 50/50 for visitors who have their act together, or who show up not having a clue what’s going on.

Christmas Stroll Updates and Efforts

Fleming opened the discussion with what’s changing with the Stroll. For the first time, the Gardiner Street Fair & Gear Swap on Main Street. Fleming is hoping to organize a Santa Clause Parade – but has yet to find a Santa Claus and requested for the Board to let her know if anyone who would possibly

be interested. The Visitor Center will be closed because the staff will be putting their efforts into the Street Fair, and they don't have the capacity to do crowd management this year.

Christmas Fest Updates

Lots of vendors are eager to participate and the Dinolube and Market are excited to host again this year. The schedule is already looking full.

Social Media Update

Our most successful post for November so far is from 11.4.21 which is a picture of a bull elk in front of Roosevelt Arch. Generally Speaking, the Arch performs consistently well on social media.

Outstanding Business

3.1 Compliments to the FY 2021 Marketing Plan

Skelton highlighted an email he received from the Montana Office of Tourism that noted Petcoff's exceptional plan that they intend to disseminate as an example to other CVB's to be used as an example.

Board Member Vacancies 2022

Skelton noted that there will be four vacant Board of Directors Seats available for upcoming 2022 election and encouraged the Board to recruit and invite Chamber Members to run.

Public Comment

4.1 Successful Gardiner Update

The organization has successfully drafted a neighborhood plan and upcoming meetings for the community to review the plan are pending. A paper copy of the draft will be provided at the Gardiner Chamber and available to the public.

Meeting Adjourned.

Date of Next Meeting: December 16, 2021, 12:00pm – 1:00pm